

Invocabit
22 February 2026
Matthew 4:1-11 (Genesis 3:1-21; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10)

Remember

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ—Amen

The text for this morning's sermon is the Holy Gospel appointed for today from the Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew, the fourth chapter.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit—Amen

We began this season of Lent, as we always do, with Ash Wednesday. At the beginning of that service, even before Confession and Absolution, we began with the imposition of ashes, and with the words: "Remember, you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

And today, half a week later, the first Sunday in Lent, we remember yet again what this is all about. Once again, we are called upon to remember—remember our past, remember our mortality, remember why we die. We remember how we got here.

We need to remember because we are forgetful. There are so many other things competing for our attention. Because of the fall in Eden, we are cursed to toil. Work was a good gift of God pre-fall. But now, as a result of sin, work has become toil. And because we have to toil, we have to have transportation and tools and time invested in our toil. And so, we need to toil even more. Because of the fall, goods are scarce. And so, we have to eke out a living. And because we toil so hard, we need down time and vacations—and they are sometimes even more toil.

None of these things are bad in themselves. God calls us to different kinds of work to love and serve our neighbor, as well as to support our families. God gives us little breaks in the routine for our mental and physical health. But today's readings are a warning not to forget what

is really important, what Jesus told Martha was the “one thing [which is] needful” in the midst of her toil and service to Him and His disciples: to hear the Word of the Lord. You see, God’s Word reminds us of what we too often forget: that we are in this mess because of sin.

Our forgetting of God’s Word is not simply a matter of bad memory or of too many irons in the fire, dear friends. Eve turned away from the Word of God because she was tempted by the devil. “Did God really say...?” “You will not surely die.” “God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God.” The tempter distracts us and then lies to us. He slithers up to our ears and whispers temptations to us to abandon the Word of God.

“So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate.”

Remember, you are dust and to dust you shall return.

And indeed, their eyes were opened. They realized that something had changed. They had left God’s protection. They brought death upon themselves, the Garden, the world, and their descendants to come. This is where it all started, lest we forget.

God told the man that the ground was cursed, and he would have to toil for a miserly share of scarce food, and at the end of it all, he (and all people) would die. God told the woman that bearing children would be painful, and the harmonious relationship between men and women would be poisoned by a desire to rule and not be ruled. God told the serpent that a man would be born of a woman who would come into the world as a champion to redeem mankind. And though the serpent would bruise His heel, this Messiah would bruise the head of the serpent. This Christ would be mankind’s hope of vindication even in the midst of death. And as we will learn, this Savior will defeat death by dying. He will overcome the sin of the tree of knowledge

of good and evil by dying as a result of sin on the tree of the cross. He will redeem the woman who was the mother of all humanity by being born of a woman. He will heal our breach of God's Word by fulfilling God's Word. He uses God's Word as a weapon against the devil because He is God's Word made flesh.

And so, when our Lord does come, fulfilling the prophecy of the human champion who will smash the head of the devil, we see their combat in today's Holy Gospel. Right after His baptism, "Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." This is their first direct confrontation, at least as recorded in Scripture.

This text is also a reminder. Lest we forget that God promised a Savior, and that God fulfilled that promise in Jesus the Christ, lest we forget that we cannot defeat the devil by our own strategy and righteousness, we are reminded that "for us fights the valiant one whom God himself elected." We are reminded that "God, the Son of God should take our mortal form for mortals' sake."

We are reminded of the power of the Word of God—that even in His suffering and temptation, our Lord Jesus Christ beats back the serpent by means of the Word. Three times, the Serpent asks Jesus "Did God really say...?" by offering Him a deal which is contrary to God's Word, and three times Jesus responds with "It is written." Because, you see, things are written, dear friends, so that we will not forget—so that we will remember. The Scriptures are written so that we will call them to mind when we are tempted. And they are "written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

And with the third and final "it is written" in our Lord's battle with the devil, Jesus says to him, "Be gone, Satan!" They will meet again in combat at the cross, where Jesus will indeed

deliver a mortal blow to the serpent's head, not just ordering him, "Be gone," but making him be gone.

Before this encounter between Jesus and the devil took place in the wilderness, Jesus was baptized. This is important, dear friends. Because, you see, it points us to our own baptism as the basis of our own battles with Satan. For in Holy Baptism, the powerful name of the Triune God was placed on you by command and invitation of the Messiah, the Christ, the Champion and Vindicator of mankind.

And the fact that "You are dust, and to dust you shall return" was not the only thing you were called to remember on Ash Wednesday. There was also the invocation of the Holy Trinity: "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit." This is the name into which we are baptized. It is our remembrance of baptism.

Remember.

It is our baptism and the Word which strengthens us for battle against the devil, as well as against his allies of the world and our own sinful nature. We cross ourselves in remembrance of baptism, and in remembrance of the cross, where Jesus was bruised in His heel, but where Jesus bruised the head of the serpent.

And so, lest we forget, our victory over the devil is in Christ. He is the Victor. And by means of Word and Sacrament, He gives this victory to us. He teaches us how to do combat with the serpent: by calling to mind the Word of God. By living in your baptism. By strengthening yourself and breaking the fast of this world's scarcity by eating and drinking that which strengthens both body and soul: the very body and blood of the Christ who defeated the devil and rescued us.

On this day, we remember the fall into sin, and the rising up of Jesus against the devil. We remember being tempted to set aside the Word of God, and we remember the Word of God being weaponized against the devil. We remember the cross, upon which Jesus crushes the head of the devil on our behalf.

So let us remember how to fight, dear friends. Let us remember not to grow weary or give up. Let us remember our baptism and the defeat of Satan by the Word of God.

Remember, you are forgiven for all your sins.

In the Name of the Father and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit—Amen

The peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus—
Amen

Sermon based on one by the Rev. Larry Beane